

DEDICATION

JOHN O. SAWYER, JR.

The California Botanical Society dedicates this volume of *Madroño* to one of California's most influential plant ecologists, John O. Sawyer, Jr., in recognition of his distinguished accomplishments in research, in teaching, and in conservation. John was born in Chico, California in 1939. As an undergraduate he attended California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo and California State University, Chico (as they are now known), where he earned his bachelor's degree in 1961. He received his M. S. in ecology (1963) and Ph. D. in plant ecology (1966) from Purdue University. While pursuing his graduate degrees, John was an instructor at Chico, a graduate assistant at Purdue, and a field ecologist for a consulting firm with projects in Costa Rica and Thailand. His work in those two countries resulted in productive collaborations with A. A. Lindsey and A. W. Küchler and two major publications. In 1966, John joined the faculty of Humboldt State University where he remained until his retirement in 2001.

John has published more than forty books and papers, with more in preparation. While there were excursions into such diverse topics as the biological formations of the eastern United States, the vegetation life zones of Costa Rica, and even a flora of a region in northern Thailand, John's passion has been the vegetation of California, particularly of the northwestern part of the state. Having gone into the field with him for almost forty years, I can attest to his boundless enthusiasm and incredible knowledge. You can see this so clearly in his latest book, *Northwest California: a Natural History*. He is the co-author, along with Todd Keeler-Wolf, of *A Manual of California Vegetation*. It is recognized as the standard reference on the subject. A new edition is in the final stages of preparation. John has also contributed treatments of the montane and subalpine vegetation of the Klamath Mountains, the forests of northwestern California, and alpine vegetation in *Terrestrial Vegetation of California*, edited by Michael Barbour, et al. John, as his students would say, has this thing about woody plants, especially conifers. His *Trees and Shrubs of California*, co-authored by John Stuart, also at Humboldt State, has received excellent reviews. Sawyer's research was recognized by his faculty colleagues when he was selected as Scholar of the Year at Humboldt State University in 1997.

Some plant ecologists have little interest in or knowledge of the flora itself. Not so with Sawyer. He has been involved in documenting the range extension of subalpine fir into California; authored a paper on the serpentine flora of the Lassics; authored or co-authored taxonomic innovations in *Rhamnus* and *Frangula*, four family treatments in *The Jepson Manual of Higher Plants of California*, and the treatment of *Rhamnaceae* that will appear in the *Flora of North America North of Mexico*. Five editions of our *Keys to the Families and Genera and Vascular Plants in Northwestern California* have been published; twenty-two editions our checklist of the plants of that same region have appeared. John is also

accomplished with the clippers, field press, and plastic bag, the result being about 10,000 collection numbers.

While a faculty member at Humboldt State, John taught general ecology and developed upper division courses in plant ecology, arctic and alpine ecology, and a general education class in California natural history. He was also a prime mover in a very popular spring offering, the desert field trip. Students always commented that his courses were both intellectually and physically demanding. One of John's former students, Andrea Pickart, recalls that he was both demonstrating "critical thinking" and demanding it of his students long before it became an academic cliché. By physically demanding, I mean that John is not known for leading leisurely strolls across the countryside. Of course you were going to go to the top of that mountain; there might be interesting manzanitas there. The lack of a well-defined trail is a trivial impediment. These days, John's field trips for the California Native Plant Society and his Jepson Workshops are very popular, with a number of return participants.

John served as the major professor for about 50 graduate students and was a committee member for a number of others. What is remarkable is how many of them remain close friends and colleagues. They now have important faculty, federal and state agency positions, and are successful consultants around the country. They constitute an extended family. "Once a Sawyer student..."

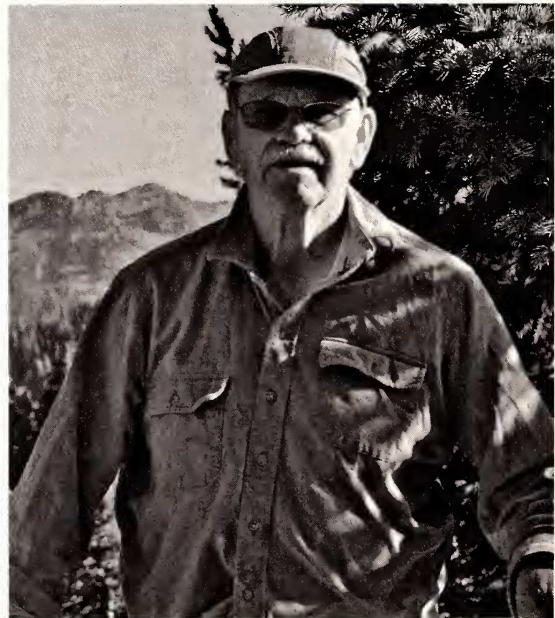


Photo by Michael Kauffmann, October 2008

John has also made significant contributions to the study of our state's rare and endangered plants and its forests. He was an editor of the second edition of the California Native Plant Society's *Inventory of Rare and Endangered Plants of California*. He has held several important positions in CNPS, including the presidency of the society. It was under his leadership that CNPS began its transformation into a truly statewide organization. John remains active in the society, especially with the North Coast Chapter. In 2006, he became a Councilor for the Save the Redwoods League.

Had John been involved in drafting this dedication, he would have wanted to acknowledge the encouragement that he has received from Dale Thornburgh, his long-time friend and colleague, and Jane Cole, his wife and intrepid companion in the field. Allow me to do that on his behalf.

JAMES P. SMITH, JR.
Professor of Botany, Emeritus
Department of Biological Sciences
Humboldt State University